

**INQUIRY-BASED TEACHING (IBT) TO TEACH READING FOR ENGLISH  
FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES (EAP)<sup>1</sup>:  
ITS STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS, AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS  
(A Case Study on Teaching Reading for EAP for UNS Graduate Students)**

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**Abstract:** Reading is considered as a merely passive cognitive process resulted in inactive classes leading to unfavorable learning atmosphere. IBT is one of the solutions for a more successful reading class on both the improvement of students' reading comprehension skill and achievement. IBT is a teaching technique rooted in questioning — both students' questions about the material under investigation and the interrogation of students by teachers to elicit understanding (Lewandowski: 2010). IBT employs the appropriate tenets, stages, and strategies appropriate to teach reading for EAP, an integrated English training focusing on reading based on genre. The research involves 3 classes holding in 20 meetings assisted by different teachers. IBT provides some strengths assisting students' learning and promoting their achievements, i.e. IBT provides a means to actively involve students in the learning process, validates habits of mind, and gives students with different learning styles the chance to excel and contribute in the classroom activities. Some limitations originate from technical and cultural barriers resulted from students' lack of linguistic competence and affective domains. At the end of EAP sessions, students show some improvement in their reading comprehension skill evaluated from their formative and summative assessments.

**Keywords:** *Inquiry-Based Teaching, English for Academic Purposes, reading, Graduate Students*

### Introduction

Sebelas Maret University (UNS) is about to notify itself as one of the world-class universities which targets to produce its graduates of world-class qualities. The Decree of UNS Rector number 499/UN27/PP/2011 about an obligation of UNS first year Undergraduate, Graduate, and Postgraduate students to pass the minimum grade of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) pre-test was issued to reach the goal of improving students' academic achievement, effort, and potentials (Mugijatna, 2012).

EAP orientates as an integrated English training to assist students' need of reading where study skills given are to support the need (Santosa, 2011: i). The method implemented in the teaching and learning process of EAP is Inquiry-Based Teaching (IBT). Lewandowski (2010) defines Inquiry-Based Instruction as a teaching technique rooted in questioning — both students' questions about the material under investigation and the interrogation of students by teachers to elicit understanding.

The tenets and steps of IBT are considered appropriate to help students to develop their English proficiency required at least to work on their reading needs for their academic achievement. 5E model of IBT which is implemented in the teaching and learning process is broken down into stages: *Engagement, Exploration, Explanation, Elaboration, and Evaluation* (Warner and Myers, 2012: 3).

### Methodology

The research is conducted as a case study employing an intensive holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit (Merriam, 1998: 34). It is an ethnographic case study based on its disciplinary orientation focusing on the culture of a school, a group of students, or classroom behavior (1998: 34), and a multiple evaluative case study based on its intent of the research involving description, explanation, and judgment (Lincoln and Guba (1981: 375) in Merriam (1998: 39)).

The research engages the snowball, chain, or network purposeful sampling (Patton (1990: 169) in Merriam, 1998: 63) involving some participants: (1) three classes of graduate students joining EAP training during the term of January-March; 2) EAP teachers, (3) Language Center staff, and (4) EAP team. Data are collected from some interviews with EAP team, teachers and Language Center staff, class observations, documents, and questionnaire. To analyze data, Merriam (1998: 194) suggests that they must be organized and analyzed in the stages of the within-case and cross-case analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> English for Academic Purposes developed by UNS EAP team

## Findings and Discussion

### *The Strengths of IBT to Teach Reading for EAP*

a. IBT provides a means to actively involve students in the learning process.

EAP teachers invited their students to obtain themselves with active learning during the training process by implementing IBT. See table 3.1 to scan how the respective teachers activate their students' comprehension to genres' structure and features.

Table 3.1: IBT as A Means of Active Learning

| IBT Phases  | Class A                                                                               | Class B                                                                 | Class C                                                              |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Engagement  | Class or group brainstorming                                                          |                                                                         |                                                                      |
| Exploration | Exposing students to sample texts to get the structure and features                   |                                                                         |                                                                      |
| Explanation | Obtaining teachers' reinforcement on genres' structures and features                  |                                                                         |                                                                      |
| Elaboration | Accomplishing various reading exercises in groups or individually supported by others |                                                                         |                                                                      |
| Evaluation  | Summarizing points of learning genres*)                                               | *) and having group or individual presentation as formative assignments | Having follow-up exercises and presentation as formative assignments |

b. IBT develops and validates habits of mind

Students' ability to develop habits of mind as life-long learners is one of the considerations of EAP team to recommend the implementation of IBT. EAP teachers develop their students' habits of mind in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Teachers' Assistance to Develop Students' Habits of Mind

| Class A                                                                                  | Class B                                                                                               | Class C                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teacher 1 shared reading tips and suggested more exposure to English authentic materials | Teacher 2 conducted brainstorming and activated Ss' schemata to be better-engaged with the materials. | Teacher 3 facilitated learning on different media to trigger better inquiry, and conducted discussion to build culture of inquiry. |

c. IBT provides students with different learning styles the chance to excel and contribute in the classroom

EAP teachers were aware of students' different learning styles and tried to present materials using various strategies. See table 3.3. to get a clearer idea how teachers facilitate their students despite their different learning styles.

Table 3.3: Teachers' facilitating Student's Different Learning Styles

|         | Auditory learners                                       | Visual learners                     | Auditory-Visual learners | Kinesthetic learners                                  |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Class A | Playing soft music while working and giving explanation | Presenting slides and boardnotes to | Playing video            | Asking students to have presentation or demonstration |
| Class B | Questioning and explaining                              |                                     | -                        |                                                       |
| Class C |                                                         |                                     | Playing video            |                                                       |

### **The Limitations of IBT to Teach Reading for EAP**

Technical Barriers took place in all classes aside from students' high motivation and favorable learning atmosphere. The barriers dealt with students' poor English linguistic competence; particularly lack of vocabulary and grammar formulas.

Cultural Barriers also occurred. Of three classes observed, teacher 1's class appeared to face the least problem with learning attitude and motivation. She described that her class was favorable where her students were cooperative, active, and highly motivated. Unfortunately, teacher 2 faced a problem where students were less active particularly in the beginning of the training, though they were quite motivated learners due to their anxiety about their being unable to comprehend EAP materials. Anxiety also hit teacher 3's students. The circumstance was also a bit awkward when some students could not mingle well with others due to some inhibition.

### **Students' Achievements**

Students' progress were monitored from their prior, whilst, and post training achievements based on both teachers' assessments on process tests and students' scores on product tests targetting 60 as the final outcome . Table 3.4 presents that the product outcomes were quite satisfactory.

Table 3.4: Students' Product Outcomess

| Class  | Number of students | Students passing EAP | Students failing EAP | Highest final outcome | Lowest final outcome |
|--------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| ClassA | 35                 | 32                   | 3                    | 77                    | 57                   |
| ClassB | 31                 | 30                   | 1                    | 83                    | 57                   |
| ClassC | 28                 | 28                   | 8                    | 78                    | 54                   |

Table 3.5 signifies that some improvement took place in those classes during the training.

Table 3.5: Students' Final Achievement

| Class   | Prior Training                                   | Whilst Training                                                                  | Post Training                   |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Class A | < 60 on a scale of 100 or in the range of D or E | Good attendance, active participation<br>70% students passed mid-test            | 32 students passed the training |
| Class B |                                                  | Better linguistic competence and self confidence<br>83% students passed mid-test | 30 students passed the training |
| Class C |                                                  | Better class participation and class interaction<br>83% students passed mid-test | 20 students passed the training |

## Discussion

### *The Strengths of IBT to Teach Reading for EAP*

a. IBT provides a means to actively involve students in the learning process.

IBT teaching and learning strategies formulate that students play an active role as explorers or investigators during the teaching and learning process as Lewandowski (2010) suggests. Engagement is to elicit students' background knowledge and arouse their attention to the lesson's objectives. Exploration allows students to investigate and hypothesize each genre. Explanation gives students reinforcements from teachers of their exploration findings. Elaboration provides them more opportunities to master and integrate the knowledge they just got. Evaluation is the last stage for students to reflect their learning whether they questions or are assessed by teachers (Warner & Myers, 2012: 3).

EAP training is also designed to get students active in their pursuit of knowledge according to EAP objectives. EAP teachers implement IBT for it employs students' active participation. Students are involved in experimenting, questioning, reflecting, discovering, inventing, and discussing (Ciaccio, 2004: 134). Thus, IBT invites students to be actively involved in the reading process (Center for Inspired Teaching: 2008).

b. IBT validates habits of mind

Center for Inspired Teaching (2008: 1) also states that an Inquiry-Based Curriculum develops and validates 'habits of mind' that characterize a life-long learner. Students are given opportunities to take ownership of their own learning, a skill necessary for one to succeed in college and in most professional settings. IBT allows students to draw connections between academic content and their own lives. Habits of mind could be broadly defined as the characteristics of what an intelligent person may do when confronted with problems to which the solution may not be apparent (Costa and Kallick: 2000) in Lam (2004: 3).

c. IBT obtains students with different learning styles the chance to excel and contribute in the classroom activities.

IBT embraces different types of learners. It occurs because basically during the inquiry process learners obtains meaning from experience that involves a process of exploring the natural, empirical, and material world leading to questions, discovering, and testing them in the search for new understanding (Foundations: 2001 in Hartman: 2002: 11). IBT also gives students with different learning styles the chance to excel and contribute in the class (Mindtools (2001) in Hartman (2002: 11).

To facilitate visual learners, teachers provided power point slides or at least made notes of important points on the board as note pads and explanation aids (Harmer, 2001: 137-138). Videos play important roles in learning, such as seeing language in use and increasing motivation and level of interest in learning (ibid, 2001: 282). Learners who have bodily-kinesthetic intelligence may enjoy acting or performing, and are good at building and making things. They remember things through their body such as verbal memory or images (Hartman, 2002: 11).

## **The Limitations of IBT to Teach Reading for EAP**

### **a. Technical Barriers**

The technical barriers EAP teachers face deal with theorize cognitive development and cognitive style orientation at the time of beginning of second or foreign language study and cultural orientation influence reading in second or foreign language the most (Aebersold and Field, 1997: 23).

### **b. Cultural Barriers**

School culture and the overall focus of the school, such as test scores, can create more barriers that further hinder a teachers' ability to use inquiry (Wallace & Kang, 2004) in Chadwick. Moreover, students had their own issues dealing with the classroom behavior influenced by the affective domains of external sources of motivation (Harmer, 2007: 76). Class A was relatively less problematic with this area, but Class B and C needed longer time to get into the training due to their low confidence and anxiety leading to low risk taking and inhibition.

## **Students' Achievement**

Students' final outcomes were taken from formative and summative assessment, which took place at the end of the course to measure students' accomplishment of the learning objectives (Brown, 2003: 6). Significant improvement in all classes signified that IBT, teachers, and students were successful to act their roles in EAP teaching and learning process. Those three facets worked cooperatively to enhance the improvement. Each of them had maximally conducted their role during the teaching and learning process.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The research concludes that: (1) the strengths of IBT to teach reading of EAP are IBT provides a means to actively involve students in the learning process, develops and validates habits of mind, and gives students with different learning styles the chance to excel and contribute in the classroom, (2) the limitations of IBT to teach reading of EAP are technical and cultural barriers, and (3) students could perform a quite significant progress during the training and could improve their final outcome.

Recommendations are given to (1) the teachers; they should be more thoughtful and communicative dealing with students' low motivation and anxiety, (2) EAP graduate students; they need to consider what learning characteristics they can develop to improve their English command, and (3) UPT P2B; the language institution needs to provide more EAP supporting materials which enable students to during EAP training have independent-learning system. EAP Corner and EAP e-learning in SAC are required to be visited by students joining EAP classes.

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